

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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SUBJECT: NATO MID-EAST DRAFT

FOLLOWING STORY BY DAVID LANDAU APPEARED IN MAY 31
JERUSALEM POST UNDER HEADLINE "U.S. BACKS DOWN ON NATO
MID-EAST DRAFT."
BEGIN TEXT: THE US HAS DECIDED NOT TO HAVE NATO ISSUE
A DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST WHICH ISRAEL CONSIDERED
"ONE-SIDED." INSTEAD NATO MINISTERS CURRENTLY MEETING IN
WASHINGTON WILL PROBABLY DIRECT A BLANDLY WORDED CALL TO
THE MIDDLE EAST PROTAGONISTS TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT.
ISRAEL WAS INFORMED OF THE US DECISION YESTERDAY. (THIS
WAS CONFIRMED BY US OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON ACCORDING TO
THE JERUSALEM POST CORRESPONDENT THERE.) BUT THE RELIEF
FELT IN JERUSALEM WAS TINGED WITH A BITTER AFTER-TASTE
RESULTING FROM WHAT OFFICIALS HERE REGARDED AS HIGH-HANDED
US CONDUCT TOWARD ISRAEL.
OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO REGARD THE EPISODE OF THE NATO
DRAFT AS A SIGNIFICANT OMEN OF INTENSIFIED AMERICAN
PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO SOFTEN ITS NEGOTIATING STANCE.

WASHINGTON'S DECISION TO SET ASIDE THE EARLIER DRAFT,
WHICH HAD REFERRED TO THE PALESTINIAN'S "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS"
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AND TO ISRAEL'S OBLIGATION TO WITHDRAW "ON ALL FRONTS,"
CAME AFTER ENERGETIC AND INDIGNANT ISRAEL PROTESTS IN
WASHINGTON. THE ISRAELI EMBASSY REMONSTRATED WITH STATE
DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS THAT A NATO STATEMENT OF THIS NATURE,
AT THIS TIME WOULD PREJUDICE THE CHANCES OF RENEWING NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT.

AT FIRST, EMBASSY MINISTER HANAN BARON WAS CONFRONTED WITH PROTESTATIONS OF IGNORANCE. BUT ON MONDAY US OFFICIALS ADMITTED THAT A DRAFT DOCUMENT WAS INDEED BEING CONSIDERED, THOUGH NO TOP-LEVEL DECISION HAD YET BEEN TAKEN.

YESTERDAY THE US CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN TEL AVIV, RICHARD VIETS, INFORMED FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR GENERAL EPHRAIM EVRON THAT WASHINGTON'S POLICY DECISION NOW APPEARED TO BE TO SET ASIDE THE "STAFF LEVEL" DRAFTS AND SUPPORT AN "ANODYNE" TEXT. ISRAELI SOURCES SAID THIS TEXT SEEMED SATISFACTORY FROM ISRAEL'S STANDPOINT. VIETS POINTED OUT THAT THE NATO DRAFTING COMMITTEE HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED IT.

THE ISRAELI SOURCES COULD NOT ASSESS TO WHAT EXTENT, IF AT ALL, ISRAEL'S PROTESTS HAD INFLUENCED THE AMERICAN DECISION. THEY WERE PLAINLY FEELING BITTER AND CHASTENED BY AMERICA'S FAILURE TO INFORM ISRAEL EARLIER THAT THE ORIGINAL (AND, IN ISRAEL'S EYES, OBJECTIONABLE) TEXT HAD BEEN UNDER CONSIDERATION. (ISRAEL LEARNED OF THE DRAFT FROM EUROPEAN SOURCES.) THEY SAW THE US PERFORMANCE, IN CIRCULATING A MIDDLE EAST DRAFT AMONG NATO COUNTRIES WHILE CONCEALING IT FROM ISRAEL, AS EVIDENCE OF WASHINGTON'S DETERMINATION TO EXERT NEW POLITICAL PRESSURE ON JERUSALEM IN THE AFTERMATH OF ISRAEL'S REVERSAL OVER THE PLANES SALE TO SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT.

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THERE IS A GROWING ACCEPTANCE IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES HERE OF THE ASSESSMENT THAT WASHINGTON IS NOW PREPARING THE GROUND FOR THE EVENTUAL PRESENTATION OF ITS OWN PEACE PLAN FOR THE MIDDLE EAST. AN ATMOSPHERE OF DEMONSTRABLY IREDEEMABLE DEADLOCK BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT WOULD, ACCORDING TO THIS ASSESSMENT, BEST SUIT THE ADMINISTRATION WHEN IT STEPS IN WITH ITS OWN SOLUTION. SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE WOULD BLUNT THE CRIES OF "IMPOSED SETTLEMENT" THAT WOULD PRESUMABLY EMANATE FROM ISRAEL AND FROM ITS SUPPORTERS IN THE CONGRESS.

ISRAEL TELEVISION NEWS LAST NIGHT QUOTED "HIGHLY-PLACED POLITICAL SOURCES" AS SAYING THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT CONSIDER REVISING ITS PEACE OFFER ON THE SINAI FRONT IN VIEW OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT'S RECENTLY STATED CONDITIONS FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, THE BROADCAST REPORTED FOREIGN MINISTER MOSHE DAYAN'S DENIAL OF ANY SUCH INTENTION. END TEXT.
LEWIS

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